

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 26, 2022

Current Conditions

- California and much of the Western U.S. is immersed in a third consecutive year of extreme drought. This is also the third statewide drought declared in California during this century (2007-2009, 2012-2016, 2020 – present).
- January, February, and March 2022 were the driest on record dating back over 100 years, with just six inches of precipitation observed across the Sierra Nevada.
- Hot and dry conditions are expected to continue through November indicating a late start to water year 2023, extending fire season and setting the stage for dry watersheds under any snowpack that forms in winter. The current outlook for water year 2023 is another year of drought as the third consecutive winter with La Nina conditions is expected.
- The State is taking action to prepare for the possibility of a fourth dry year.
- To replace and replenish the water that thirstier soils, vegetation, and the atmosphere will consume under hotter and drier conditions, Governor Newsom announced an adaptation strategy that targets capturing, recycling, de-salting, and conserving water supply.
- “California’s Water Supply Strategy, Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future” aims to expand supplies by 1.6 million acre-feet by 2030, in addition to creating capacity of more than three million acre-feet of new storage to mitigate the impacts of the anticipated 10% reduction of traditional water supplies.
- All of California’s 58 counties are under a drought emergency proclamation. Californians are being asked to reduce their water use by 15 percent over 2020 levels to protect water reserves and help maintain critical flows for fish and wildlife wherever possible.
- As of September 26, the state’s voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 171 dry wells in the past 30 days. Most are in San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys.

The California Drought Update is a weekly roundup of conditions, state actions and upcoming developments. It is produced by an interagency team that includes the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Water Resources Control Board and the Department of Public Health. For the latest on drought, please visit <https://drought.ca.gov>. For tips and resources for conserving water, please visit www.saveourwater.com.

Recent Events and State Actions

Delta conveyance project public meetings and extension of comment period

(September 22 and 23): DWR hosted the second of three virtual public hearings to receive public comment on the Draft Environmental Impact report for the Delta conveyance project on **September 22** and announced **September 23** that the 90-day public comment period, stretching from July 27 through October 27, will be extended another 50 days to December 16. The first public meeting was held September 13 and the third will be September 28. The proposed project would modernize water transport infrastructure in the Delta to address the effects of sea level rise and climate change, minimize water supply disruption caused by an earthquake, protect the ability of the State Water Project to reliably deliver water to two of every three Californians, and provide operational flexibility to improve aquatic conditions in the Delta. A multitude of multi-lingual materials about the EIR and how to comment are available [here](#).



Interior announces Colorado River plan (September 22):

At a Colorado River symposium in Santa Fe, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland outlined steps the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will take to conserve water in Lake Mead and Lake Powell to avert disruption of water deliveries and power generation. The actions include:



- Ensuring that California, Arizona, and Nevada continue to develop voluntary measures and agreements to reduce diversions from the river as soon as possible.
- Supporting a five-point plan from Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming to avert a crisis.
- Investing \$4 billion in federal funds into drought resilience and water conservation programs as quickly as possible.
- Initiating an administrative process to address operational realities under current river operation guidelines while parties develop new guidelines.
- Moving ahead with administrative actions to reduce releases from Lake Powell below seven million acre-feet per year, if needed, to protect critical infrastructure.
- Implementing emergency drought operations at Lake Powell.
- Preparing to administratively force additional reductions in 2023, as needed.
- Accelerating ongoing maintenance actions and studies of the bypass tubes at Glen Canyon Dam (Lake Powell) to potentially increase water delivery capacity from a low reservoir.
- Assessing how to account for and allocate system losses due to evaporation, seepage, and other loss mechanisms.

Interior also announced that it will establish a two-step process to solicit short-term conservation contributions and longer-term durable system efficiency projects. Longer-term projects could include initiatives such as canal lining, re-regulating reservoirs, ornamental and non-functional turf removal, salinity projects and other infrastructure or “on the ground” activities. Projects could also be related to aquatic ecosystem restoration and impacts mitigation, crop water efficiency, rotational fallowing, and marginal land idling. The Bureau of Reclamation will hold listening sessions on September 30 to hear feedback on its plan. The California Secretary for Natural Resources, chair of the State Water Board, and other state officials attended the symposium and continue negotiating water use cutbacks among the California water districts with rights to Colorado River flows. The river supplies about a third of the water used by Southern California.

Recent Events and State Actions

Interior announces Colorado River plan continued...

Peter Nelson, chair of the Colorado River Board of California, said “California recognizes the need to act urgently. We must continue to reduce demands to avoid an untenable situation on the Colorado River system. California water agencies are working in real-time to build on previous water-saving actions and conserve significant volumes of water each year beginning in 2023. We are eager to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to pursue funding opportunities to enable reductions in water use while also accelerating projects to address impacts at the Salton Sea. California calls on our basin partners to join us in finding ways to preserve the health of the Colorado River and this important water supply.”

Water Commission considers water storage projects and climate extremes (September 21): The Water Commission heard a presentation from DWR staff on preparing the State Water Project for drought, flood, and wildfire in a changed climate.

Water recycling and groundwater replenishment project tour and documentary (September 19): The chair of the State Water Board toured construction of the Pure Water Soquel water recycling plant and participated in development of a documentary about the Soquel Creek Water District project. It will take highly treated wastewater that would have previously been discharged into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and purify it using a proven three-step advanced treatment process.

Save Our Water on the road (ongoing): At a Save Our Water event in San Bernardino on **September 19**, State Water Board Vice Chair, Dorene D’Adamo, Senator Ochoa Bogh, and local water leaders shared the urgent need to prioritize water conservation amid extreme drought. Save Our Water and DWR also spread the water conservation message at the Kern County Fair on **September 23-24** and at the Oroville Salmon Festival on **September 24**.



Photo: CSUSB

Curtailments adjustments (ongoing): The State Water Board continues to monitor six critical watersheds where worsening conditions may threaten water supplies. Curtailments remain in effect in the [Delta watershed](#), the [Russian River watershed](#), and the [Scott River and Shasta River watersheds](#). Curtailments are suspended for the [Mill Creek and Deer Creek watersheds](#) (sub-watersheds of the Delta) but curtailments in the larger Delta watershed may apply. Board staff will continue to adjust curtailment orders as conditions change. Water right holders should closely monitor their email and the [watershed drought webpages](#) for curtailment updates.



Tribal / Local Actions

- **Tribal governments:** Tribal emergency drought proclamations as reported by Cal OES to date: Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, Karuk Tribe, Resighini Rancheria, Tule River Indian Tribe, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, Yurok Tribe, Wiyot Tribe.
- **Local government:** Local emergency drought proclamations as reported by Cal OES to date: Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Madera, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo.

Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

State solicits input on drought contingency plan template: DWR, in collaboration with the State Water Board, is hosting two separate workshops on **September 30** to solicit participants' input on two Water Shortage Contingency Plan draft templates, one for small water suppliers and one for schools with a water system, as part of a comprehensive effort to assist small water suppliers in meeting these new legislative requirements. Participants may wish to attend one or both of the informational sessions.

August water conservation data announced: The State Water Board will announce urban water conservation numbers at its board meeting on **October 3**.

Save Our Water Day at Big Fresno Fair: On **October 8**, the Save Our Water team will continue to share water conservation messaging will be at the Big Fresno Fair for a special Save Our Water Day.

Key Data Points and Resources

- Daily Hydrological & Climate Information summary: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/reportapp/javareports?name=DLYHYDRO>
- Statewide water conditions: http://cdec.water.ca.gov/water_cond.html
- Daily Reservoir Storage Summary: <https://cdec.water.ca.gov/reservoir.html>
- Water Year Forecast and Monthly Distribution: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/reportapp/javareports?name=B120DIST>
- Monthly water supplier reports on water production and conservation: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/conservation_reporting.html
- Latest groundwater conditions and information: <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/CalGWLlive/>
- Information on state drought actions and assistance: <https://drought.ca.gov/>
- Conservation tips and resources for consumers: <https://saveourwater.com/>